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AUTHOR Powell, Gary N.; Butterfield, D. Anthony
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the present study was to determine the influences of sex and sex-role identification on the perceived characteristics of a good manager. A sample of 335 students from various undergraduate and graduate business courses completed the Bem Sex-Role Inventory both for themselves and for a good manager. Three hypotheses were tested--that the good manager is perceived as androgynous in sex-role identification rather than as masculine, feminine, or undifferentiated; that the individuals' perceptions of a good manager are affected by their own sex-role identification; and that the effect of sex-role identification on individuals' perceptions of a good manager are independent of the effect of sex. The results indicated an overwhelming preference for a masculine manager. Strong correspondence was observed between comparable self-scores and ideal-scores for both males and females. Data show that the effects of sex-role identification and sex on individuals' perceptions of a good manager are different: the effect of varying sex on individuals' ideal-group memberships was negligible, while the effect of varying self-group membership was considerable. (Author/IRT)

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SEX, SEX-ROLE IDENTIFICATION, AND THE GOOD MANAGER[1]

by

Gary N. Powell

Department of Management and Administrative Sciences

University of Connecticut

and

D. Anthony Butterfield

Department of Management

University of Massachusetts

Presented at

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The Academy of Management

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Sex, Sex-Role Identification, and the Good Manager

Abstract

The influence of sex and sex-role identification on perceptions of a good manager was examined. Results from 335 subjects showed that sex-role identification accounted for significant differences while sex had virtually no effect. A masculine manager was strongly preferred, rather than an androgynous manager as hypothesized.

With more women in higher ranks, organizations need to be aware of possible differences between male and female behavior. The present study was an attempt to understand how the perceived characteristics of a good manager may vary as a function of sex and sex-role identification.

Previous research which has investigated males' and females' attitudes and behavior in organizations has yielded apparently contradictory findings in several areas, e.g.:

1. Job preferences. Bartol (1974) and Bigoness and Boedeker (1976) discounted the hypothesis that women prefer extrinsic outcomes and men prefer intrinsic outcomes but still found some sex-related differences. On the other hand, Schuler (1975) found support for traditional views of women as valuing affiliation-oriented outcomes more and achievement-oriented outcomes less than men.

2. Leadership styles. Several studies found no differences in actual styles (Day & Stogdill, 1972; Chapman, 1975; Osborn & Vicars, 1976), while Bartol and Butterfield (1974) found differences in evaluations of styles for male and female leaders. Osborn and Vicars (1976) concluded that differences may appear in laboratory settings which do not appear in field studies.

3. Perceived characteristics of a good manager. Schermerhorn et al. (1975) found that males prefer a more "masculine" manager and females a "neutral" manager. However, Schein (1973, 1975) found agreement by male and female managers on a decidedly masculine profile of the successful manager. In a similar vein, Rosenkrantz et al. (1968) and Broverman et al. (1970, 1972) found that males and females agreed on the socially desirable characteristics of adults as masculine. In a later study, though, Kravetz (1976) found a shift away from sex-role stereotypes in the description of healthy adults by a sample of women and attributed the shift to the influence of the women's liberation movement in the 1970's.

In recent psychological journals the concept of androgyny, referring to a high propensity of both feminine and masculine characteristics in an individual, has been advocated. Studies by Bem (1975) and Bem and Lenney (1976) observed that masculine (high on masculinity, low on femininity) and feminine (high on femininity, low on masculinity) individuals go to great lengths to avoid engaging in behavior characteristic of the other type and experience strongly negative feelings when they do engage in it; no such inhibitions were seen in androgynous individuals. Researchers have also found that androgynous individuals have higher self-esteem (Spence et al., 1975) and are better adjusted (Heilbrun, 1976) than masculine, feminine, or undifferentiated (low on masculinity and femininity) individuals. These studies support an association between androgyny and more effective behavior in a variety of situations.

None of the studies reported to date which have investigated the concept of androgyny have taken it inside the work organization. Its applicability is obvious: If the more effective person is androgynous, the more effective manager may be androgynous as well.

The concept also suggests a possible explanation for the inconsistent research findings reported above. Males and females who follow traditional sex-role stereo-

types in their job preferences, leadership styles, or views of a good manager may be highly sex-role-typed individuals themselves. Individuals who do not adhere to rigid stereotypes in their job environments may be androgynous in sex-role identification. Thus the effect of sex-role identification on outcome variables may be independent of and greater than the effect of sex.

The purpose of the present study was to determine the influences of sex and sex-role identification on the perceived characteristics of a good manager. Specifically, it was hypothesized that:

1. The "good manager" is perceived as androgynous in sex-role identification rather than masculine, feminine, or undifferentiated.

2. Individuals' perceptions of a good manager are affected by their own sex-role identifications.

3. The effect of sex-role identification on individuals' perceptions of a good manager is independent of the effect of sex. No hypothesis was made as to which has the greater effect.

Method

Sample

The sample was composed of 335 students from various undergraduate and graduate business courses at the University of Connecticut. The students were 72% males and 84% undergraduates. Their ages ranged from 19 to 49 with a median of 20.3 years. All but 4 were U.S. citizens, and all but 9 were business majors.

Measurement Instrument

Bem (1974) developed an instrument to assess individuals' sex-role identification which was used in the study. The Bem Sex-Role Inventory (BSRI) contains 20 phrases characteristic of the masculine sex-role stereotype (e.g., self-reliant,

defends own beliefs, ambitious), 20 phrases characteristic of the feminine sex-role stereotype (e.g., sympathetic, yielding, shy), and 20 phrases not associated exclusively with either stereotype (e.g., helpful, conscientious, conceited). Each individual completed the BSRI both for him/herself and a good manager. Ratings on the items were made on a 7-point scale, ranging from 1 (never or almost never true) to 7 (always or almost always true).

Procedure

A questionnaire containing the BSRI for both the respondent and a good manager was administered during the first class of each course. It was introduced as an instrument intended to "solicit your views on management before they are influenced by the course" and took individuals approximately 15 minutes to complete. Summary statistics of item scores for each course were returned to the instructor for use later in the semester.

Scoring of Instrument

Masculinity and femininity "self-scores" were calculated for each individual as the average of scores on the masculine and feminine items in his/her self-description. The median masculinity and femininity self-scores were then calculated for the entire sample of males and females combined, with females weighted more heavily than males to equalize their numbers statistically as recommended by Bem and Watson (1976). Once the median masculinity and femininity self-scores were determined, individuals were classified as follows:

		Masculinity Self-Score	
		Below Median	Above Median
Femininity Self-Score	Above Median	Feminine	Androgynous
	Below Median	Undifferentiated	Masculine

This classification was called the individual's own sex-role group or "self-group."

Masculinity and femininity "ideal-scores" were calculated from each individual's description of a good manager using the same procedure as for the self-description. The good-manager description was classified as androgynous, masculine, feminine, or undifferentiated according to the median masculinity and femininity self-scores, i.e., the same medians as those used to classify individuals into self-groups. This classification was called the individual's "ideal group."

The decision not to establish the ideal-groups on the basis of the ideal-score medians is worthy of note. It was necessary for the purpose of the study to compare how individuals described a good manager and how they described themselves. Using the same set of medians for the creation of the self-groups and ideal-groups allowed this comparison to be made easily.

Results

Analysis of individuals' self-descriptions was conducted initially to investigate whether the basic premises of the BSRI (Bem, 1974) held for the sample in the study. Most basic and the reason for its existence is the premise that males tend to see themselves more in traditionally masculine terms than females and females tend to see themselves more in traditionally feminine terms than males. Masculinity and femininity self-scores were obtained separately for males and females. The mean self-scores were 5.19 on masculinity and 4.52 on femininity for males and 4.79 on masculinity and 4.89 on femininity for females; as might be expected, males were more masculine than feminine and females more feminine than masculine on the self-scores. Also as expected, one-way analysis of variance indicated that males scored significantly higher on masculinity ($F = 27.60$, $p < .001$) and lower on femininity ($F = 37.49$, $p < .001$) than females.

Males' self-group memberships were distributed as follows: 24.5% androgynous,

38.8% masculine, 13.8% feminine, and 22.9% undifferentiated. As expected, the masculine proportion was significantly larger than random ($p < .001$) and the feminine proportion significantly smaller than random ($p < .001$). Females' self-group memberships were distributed 28.4% androgynous, 10.5% masculine, 40.0% feminine, and 21.1% undifferentiated, with the masculine and feminine proportions both significantly different from random ($p < .001$) in the expected direction.

Another basic premise underlying the BSRI is that masculinity and femininity scores are logically independent. The correlations between masculinity and femininity self-scores were insignificant for both males ($r = .01$) and females ($r = .04$), supporting the independence of the two scores. The above results, then, discriminated between males' and females' self-descriptions as expected and corroborated the basic premises of the BSRI.

The mean ideal-scores were 5.64 on masculinity and 4.21 on femininity for males and 5.53 on masculinity and 4.25 on femininity for females. Ideal-scores were generally higher on masculinity and lower on femininity than self-scores for both males and females, with females exhibiting much greater differences between self-scores and ideal scores. The correlations between masculinity and femininity ideal-scores were significant at the .001 level for both males ($r = .46$) and females ($r = .38$), indicating that the two scores were no longer unrelated when applied to individuals' descriptions of a good manager rather than themselves.

Hypothesis 1 stated that individuals perceive a good manager to be androgynous in nature. Table 1 demonstrates overwhelming preference for a masculine manager, discounting the hypothesis. Approximately 70 percent of both males and females characterized a good manager in predominantly masculine terms. Less than 20 percent of both sexes described a good manager in androgynous, i.e., predominantly masculine and feminine, terms. Differences between results for males and females were insignificant, as indicated by the chi-square value in Table 1.

Table 2 shows preference for a masculine manager within each self-group category as well. Support for a masculine manager was least evident in the androgynous self-group, where 40 percent of individuals preferred an androgynous manager instead.

Hypothesis 2 stated that individuals' own sex-role identifications influence their perceptions of a good manager. The significant chi-square value in Table 2 supported the existence of a relationship between self-group and ideal-group membership. However, chi-square is directly proportional to the total sample size and may be significant even for a slight relationship. Two measures of the strength of relationship between two variables recommended by Blalock (1972) were examined, Cramer's V and Pearson's contingency coefficient C. Since V varies from 0 to 1, the value of V = .26 indicated a moderate relationship between self-group and ideal-group membership. C varies from 0 to .87 for a 4 x 4 table, therefore the value of C = .41 indicated a strong relationship between the two variables. Thus Hypothesis 2 was supported in an overall sense.

The nature of the relationship between self-group and ideal-group membership was also discerned from the data in Table 2. As seen in Row 1 of the table, the percentage of androgynous ideal-group membership was higher in the androgynous self-group than in any other self-group. Analogous results held for the other self-groups: The percentage of masculine ideal-group membership was highest in the masculine self-group, etc.

The significance of these results was determined by applying a significance test for the difference between two proportions (Bruning & Kintz, 1968). Within each row, the underlined percentage was matched with each of the other three percentages. For example, the following question was asked for Row 1: "Is the 39.5% androgynous ideal-group membership for the androgynous self-group significantly higher than (1) the 4.9% membership for the masculine self-group, (2) the 18.3%

membership for the feminine self-group, and (3) the 8.0% membership for the undifferentiated self-group?" As seen in Table 2, all three differences in proportions were significant at the .001 level and the question was answered yes. Differences in masculine ideal-group proportions similarly tested were significant at the .01 level. Differences in undifferentiated ideal-group proportions were close to significant, with $p = .07$. This analysis demonstrated that, even though individuals preferred a masculine manager overall, they also tended to describe a good manager in the same sex-role terms as themselves.[1]

The same point was brought out by analysis of correlations between self-scores and ideal-scores on masculinity and femininity. Strong correspondence was observed between comparable self-scores and ideal-scores for both males and females, as the correlations ranged from .35 to .46 and were all significant at the .001 level.

Hypothesis 3 stated that the effects of sex-role identification and sex on individuals' perceptions of a good manager are independent. Data presented from Tables 1 and 2 showed that the effects are <u>different</u>: The effect of varying sex on individuals' ideal-group memberships was negligible, while the effect of varying self-group membership was considerable. However, these data do not establish independence of the effects of the two variables.

Table 3 reports the results of Two-Way ANOVA using masculinity and femininity ideal-scores separately as dependent variables. Similar findings were obtained for both types of scores: The main effect of self-group was significant at the .001 level, while the main effect of sex and the interaction effect of sex and self-group were both insignificant. Hypothesis 3 was supported by the lack of interaction between self-group and sex. In addition, the effect of individuals'

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[1]The same tendency was separately observed in males and females, although the strength of the relationship between self-group and ideal-group membership was slightly stronger for males.

sex-role identifications as measured by the self-group was shown to be far greater than the effect of sex on their perceptions of a good manager, as supported by data in Tables 1 and 2.

Discussion

The results did not confirm the hypothesis that a good manager is viewed in androgynous terms. Instead, the good manager was seen to have predominantly masculine characteristics. The strong preference of a masculine manager by both males and females for a sample of undergraduate business and MBA students supported Schein's (1975) conclusions for middle managers and did not support Schermerhorn et al.'s (1975) conclusions for MBA students. Androgynous individuals preferred a masculine manager less and an androgynous manager more than other individuals, although they still preferred a masculine manager overall. Individuals in general exhibited a tendency to describe themselves and a good manager in similar terms.

At least two interpretations of these findings are possible. A more optimistic interpretation is consistent with previous research which has positively associated androgyny with mental health. By this standard, the healthiest views of management in the sample were displayed by the healthiest individuals. Perhaps androgynous individuals, less inhibited by restrictive sex-role stereotypes than others, are more able to see the reality that a good manager is androgynous too! A more pessimistic interpretation is that individuals tend to see a good manager in similar terms as themselves regardless of how they see themselves, and androgynous individuals are not different in this respect from any others. The latter interpretation, although it does not necessarily contradict the former, seems more justified because it takes into account the total results more.

The separate and stronger effect of sex-role identification than sex on per-

ceived characteristics of a good manager supports speculation made earlier in the paper. Perhaps sex is not as critical in determining attitudes and behavior in organizations as researchers have believed it to be, and sex-role identification should demand their attention instead. The two concepts have not been separated well in past research. For example, Osborn and Vicars (1976) drew conclusions about the influence of sex-role stereotypes upon examination of variance due to leader sex and not leader sex-role identification. Innumerable studies have hypothesized that males and female think or behave differently based on traditional sex-role stereotypes. Their hypotheses might better have read that individuals who fit different sex-role stereotypes think or behave differently. Again, there is a difference between an individual's biological classification as male or female and the sex-role classification which best fits the individual.

A disturbing finding of the study also reported elsewhere (Hennig, 1971; Schein, 1975) was that females saw a good manager as more unlike themselves than did males. The long-run implication may be that these women and others hold back in developing their managerial skills and in seeking management positions. Such behaviors on their part will foster the continuance of false sex-role stereotypes which proclaim that men make better managers.

The significantly positive correlations between masculinity and femininity ideal-scores suggest a possible shift away from the dominance of sex-role stereotypes on perceptions of effective management (Schein, 1975) or simply of healthy individuals (Rosenkrantz et al., 1968; Broverman et al., 1970, 1972). It indicated that differences between individuals' perceptions of a good manager could be expressed in tendencies toward being either more androgynous (higher on masculinity and femininity) or less androgynous. Although it did not take away from individuals' viewing a good manager in masculine terms overall, it may represent a step in that direction.

This study shows that sex-role identification is a variable worthy of analysis in research on organizations, particularly in studies which seek to examine sex-related effects. In the present days of heightened sensitivity by all concerning male-female issues in organizations, this is a very timely finding.

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TABLE 1

Ideal-Group Classified by Sex

	Males		Females		Totals	
	n	Pct	n	Pct	n	Pct
Ideal Group:						
Androgynous	43	17.9%	15	15.8%	58	17.3%[2]
Masculine	173	72.1	67	70.5	240	71.6[1]
Feminine	2	0.8	3	3.2	5	1.5[2]
Undifferentiated	22	9.2	10	10.5	32	9.6[2]
	240	100.0	95	100.0	335	100.0

Chi-Square = 2.80 with 3 degrees of freedom (p = n.s.)

Cramer's V = .09

Pearson's Contingency Coefficient C = .09

[1]Proportion larger than random, $p < .001$

[2]Proportion samller than random, $p < .001$

TABLE 2

Ideal-Group Classified by Self-Group[1]

	Androgynous		Masculine		Feminine		Undifferentiated		Totals	
	n	Pct	n	Pct	n	Pct	n	Pct	n	Pct
Ideal-Group:										
Androgynous	34	39.5%***	5	4.9%	13	18.3%	6	8.0%	58	17.3%
Masculine	52	60.5	87	84.5**	46	64.8	55	73.3	240	71.6
Feminine	0	0.0	0	0.0	4	5.6[2]	1	1.3	5	1.5
Undifferentiated	0	0.0	11	10.6	8	11.3	13	17.4	32	9.6
	86	100.0	103	100.0	71	100.0	75	100.0	335	100.0

Chi-Square = 66.24 with 9 degrees of freedom ($p < .001$)

Cramer's V = .26

Pearson's Contingency Coefficient C = .41

***$p < .001$

**$p < .01$

[1]Largest percentage in each row is underlined. Degree of significance shown is that for least significant difference between underlined percentage and each other percentage in the row.

[2]Significance not determined due to small numbers in row.

TABLE 3

Effect of Self-Group and Sex on Ideal-Scores

	Two-Way ANOVA		
	Main Effect by Self-Group	Main Effect by Sex	Interaction Effect
	F	F	F
Ideal Scores:			
Masculinity	15.91***	2.46	1.62
Femininity	17.75***	1.20	1.44

***p < .001